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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANAA 001101

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ARP:AMACDONALD AND AF/E

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/12/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [SM](#) [YM](#)

SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER URGES LOW-KEY U.S. APPROACH,
UNIFIED VOICE ON SOMALIA

Classified By: Ambassador Stephen A. Seche for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

¶1. (C) In a June 13 meeting with the Ambassador, Yemen's Foreign Minister opined that USG support for Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG) should be subtle. He also noted that the need for a unified international voice on Somalia had been agreed upon at a recent GCC Foreign Ministers' meeting. End Summary.

Subtlety and Unified Voice

¶2. (C) The Ambassador discussed the next steps for countries wishing to support Somali stability with Foreign Minister Abu-Bakr al-Qirbi in a meeting on June 13. The Ambassador noted that Somali President Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed now seems interested in more open support from the West, including the United States, for the TFG. Qirbi counseled caution. "American support for the TFG should be subtle," he said. "It will certainly be used by (Somali Islamists) the Shabab against the TFG." That being said, he conceded that U.S. support would be helpful. "Your support for the TFG will not help its position with the Shabab, but there are others who might change their position and support the TFG."

¶3. (C) In addition to political support, the Foreign Minister noted that the TFG was in need of military support, particularly weapons. "Maintaining an arms boycott on the TFG, while the opposition receives weapons illegally, weakens its position," he said. He added that the U.S. and EU can play "an important role" in ending weapons smuggling. He also urged that it would be better to allow the TFG to establish its 10-15 thousand strong military and police forces and allow them to fight their own battles rather than have the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) fight the battles for them.

¶4. (C) Qirbi noted that in the most recent GCC Foreign Ministers meeting, Somalia was discussed in terms of its stability and also in terms of piracy. Qirbi said that the consensus of the GCC Foreign Ministers was that there should be a single body and single envoy on Somalia so that the international community can speak with a unified voice. He complained that it was counterproductive to have "the African Union, the Arab League, the EU and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) all working separately." He suggested a meeting of the Somalia contact group that included representatives of all the various organizations to choose a single spokesman on Somalia.

Comment

¶5. (C) Qirbi is a thoughtful man, with an abiding personal

interest in Somalia. A stable Somalia is in Yemen's interest as well, and the ROYG has offered on more than one occasion to use its influence with the various players there to help stabilize the situation. Its willingness to do so may be something we will wish to test, should an opportunity arise.
End Comment.
SECHE